IN THE CLAIMS:

The status of each claim that has been introduced in the above-referenced application is identified in the ensuing listing of the claims. This listing of the claims replaces all previously submitted claims listings.

1. (Currently amended) A method for fabricating a field emission structure, comprising:

forming a dielectric layer at least partially around at least one emitter tip;

forming a mask comprising a material which is removable with selectivity over a material of the dielectric layer, at least one aperture of the mask being located substantially over the at least one emitter tip;

removing portions of the dielectric layer that are laterally adjacent to the at least one emitter tip through the at least one aperture;

removing the mask;

forming another dielectric layer adjacent to the dielectric layer;

forming ~~a conductive or semiconductive layer adjacent to~~at least a portion of an extraction grid that resides completely over the another dielectric layer; and

exposing the at least one emitter tip through the another dielectric layer and the conductive or semiconductive layer, the dielectric layer and the another dielectric layer remaining in contact with one another.

2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein forming the dielectric layer comprises forming the dielectric layer to have a thickness which is less than a height of the at least one emitter tip.

3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein forming the mask comprises forming the mask from at least one of chromium, polysilicon, and molybdenum.

4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein forming the mask comprises:

depositing a layer comprising mask material; and

planarizing the mask material.

5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 4, wherein planarizing comprises removing at least a portion of at least one electrically conductive defect that extends through the dielectric layer and into the layer comprising mask material.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein removing portions of the dielectric layer comprises exposing the portions to at least one etchant.

7. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein forming the another dielectric layer comprises forming the another dielectric layer to have a surface which is substantially coplanar with an apex of the at least one emitter tip.

8. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein forming the another dielectric layer comprises covering at least one electrically conductive defect that extends through the dielectric layer.

9. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein exposing comprises:

forming at least one aperture through ~~the~~ a conductive or semiconductive layer of at least the portion of the extraction grid, the at least one aperture being in alignment with the at least one emitter tip; and

removing portions of the another dielectric layer that are laterally adjacent to the at least one emitter tip through the at least one aperture.

10. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 9, wherein forming the at least one aperture comprises planarizing the conductive or semiconductive layer.

11. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 9, wherein removing portions of the another dielectric layer comprises exposing the portions to at least one etchant.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 9, wherein removing portions of the another dielectric layer is effected without substantially removing remaining portions of the conductive or semiconductive layer.